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**NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
Newport, R.I.**

**UNLEARNED HISTORY: THE INEFFECTUAL APPLICATION OF U.S. BROAD
ECONOMIC SANCTIONS AGAINST SYRIA**

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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30 October 2015

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Abstract

Unlearned History: The Ineffectual Application of U.S. Broad Economic Sanctions Against Syria. The United States' (U.S.) reaction to the violent repression of protest in 2011 by the Syrian government was the application of broad economic sanctions. In contrast to previously existing sanctions targeted at individual people and entities, these measures affected the Syrian economy writ large and impacted all elements of Syrian society. This paper outlines three key factors that have historically inhibited the achievement of a sending state's objectives through economic coercion, particularly when the target state was of an authoritarian nature. It then applies these factors to the current U.S. broad economic sanctions policy against Syria and analyzes the effectiveness that these additional measures have had on achieving the U.S.'s stated objectives. Finally, the paper draws conclusions and proposes recommended actions that should be considered across the near, mid, and far-term time horizons that may dampen the violence and ameliorate the humanitarian crisis within Syria.

INTRODUCTION

The use of economic sanctions as a means to achieve political objectives has been in the arsenal of statecraft as early as 432 B.C. when Athens imposed a trade embargo against Megara. The question of how effective economic sanctions are at achieving political objectives is just as enduring. The prevailing assessment is that economic sanctions are only marginally successful at achieving their stated political objectives, particularly in the increasingly interconnected economic environment.¹ Despite the seemingly poor track record, states continue to favor economic sanctions under the premise that they can serve to drive a target state towards a desired change and accomplish political objectives without the use of force.

The United States' (U.S.) imposition of broad economic sanctions on the autocratic Syrian government is a prime example of this bias and requires reconsideration. The U.S. has had increasingly restrictive economic sanctions in place against Syria since 1979 when the regime was designated as a state sponsor of terrorism.² The most recent restrictions were put in place in 2011 in response to the Syrian government's violent repression against unarmed demonstrators.³ These additional measures included U.S. entity prohibitions on new investments, exportation or sale of services, importation of petroleum or petroleum products, and involvement in transactions involving petroleum or petroleum products originating from Syria.⁴ Unlike the myriad of targeted sanctions that had been levied directly at Syrian leaders and corporations, the effect of these additional restrictions were ubiquitous and impacted the Syrian society writ large. The effect of these new measures, compounded by other states actions, has decimated the Syrian economy by reducing its gross domestic product output over fifty percent, approximately 15.3 billion dollars, since 2011.⁵

The stated objectives of these additional U.S. sanctions are twofold: to deprive the regime of the resources it needs to continue violence against civilians and to pressure the Syrian regime to allow for a democratic transition of political power.⁶ A significant amount of current reporting on Syria centering on the ongoing conflict, humanitarian assistance needs, and refugee crisis indicates little progress is being made towards meeting these objectives. However, these reports address the symptoms and not the fundamental shortfalls of the sanctions. The U.S. economic sanctions policy against the Syrian government has been ineffective fundamentally due to the high cost of compliance required of Syrian leaders, external third party support sustaining the Syrian government, and the Syrian government's ability to internally shift sanction impacts away from supporters.

BACKGROUND

The success rate of economic sanctions writ large has been a challenge to assess accurately due to the complex scenarios in which they are employed. The variability of regime type, economy size, existing trade between parties, international support, and stated objectives all serve to make each sanctions episode unique. The Hufbauer, Schott, Elliot, and Oegg (HSEO) study of over 200 economic sanction efforts concluded that they were “partially successful in 34 percent of the cases.”⁷ A subsequent independent review of the study reduced the success rate to four percent finding that of the forty claimed successes, eighteen achieved their objectives through direct or indirect use of military force; eight did not realize the concessions demanded; six were not economic sanctions, but rather trade disputes; and three were indeterminate as to achievement of sending states demands.⁸ These failure rates are more pronounced when segmenting for regime type in that sanctions against autocracies were forty percent more likely to fail over those applied to democracies.⁹

Although some variation in the conclusions may be related to how the reports defined the term economic sanctions, each bolstered the position that economic sanctions are only marginally effective at achieving the sending state's political objectives. Three key factors that contribute to the high failure rate, especially as applied to autocratic regimes, are the cost of compliance, access to third party support, and the ability to redistribute the burden of sanctions away from the political establishment and its supporters.

The first and most significant factor is determined by the objective(s) of the sanctions policy. The political cost that the target state weighs must be high enough to extract the concessions demanded of the sending state.¹⁰ This is not the same thing as maximizing economic pain. Although they are often conflated, the measure of effectiveness in sanctions policy is not the level of economic decline attained, but rather the target state's political costs associated with continued resistance to the sending state's demands.¹¹ Further, the cost of compliance is not independent of the cost of non-compliance in terms of achieving the political objectives. If the sending state's demands are so high as to damage critically or risk the political viability of the target state's ruling party, then non-compliance may be the default position regardless of cost.¹² Getting the demands accurately framed and aligned to the political objective(s) is paramount to success, especially where authoritarian regimes are involved.

Second, support that a target state receives from third parties significantly diminishes the prospect of attaining the political objectives of the applied economic sanctions. In one form, the environment created by the sanctions regime leads to exploitation of the target state. Such exploitation is predicated on the idea that non-participating state and non-state actors will seek to take advantage of the conditions under which the target state's economy

continues to operate.¹³ This is to be expected as modern interconnected economies are highly adaptable and target states can take advantage of the opportunity to substitute alternative markets for ones lost.¹⁴ Whereas this first form of third party support is economically driven, the second is driven by a sponsoring state's political agenda. From this latter perspective, the support structure may have market components but is more characterized by free economic aid and financial support between states.¹⁵ This is most likely, but not limited to, situations where a target state and sponsoring states had prior existing ties or alliances. Regardless of intent, third party support enables a target country to adapt their economies and obtain the goods and services being limited through a sanctions policy and resist acquiescing to the political demands of a sending state.¹⁶

Third, a target state leader's ability to transfer the economic burden imposed by sanctions away from themselves and loyal supporters to other societal groups increases the likelihood that sanctions will fail to achieve their objective(s). In general, the average citizen bears the socioeconomic effects of economic sanctions while political elites and their supporters remain somewhat sheltered.¹⁷ This is particularly acute in authoritarian regimes where loyalty and repression are tools by which rulers maintain power.¹⁸ In such regimes, reliance on the authoritarian bargain most often leads to increased human rights violations and repression of opposition elements.¹⁹ The consolidation of power that results from the balancing activities between loyalty and repression serves to strengthen the power of the ruling party. Further strengthening of power, increased loyalty of supporters, and repression of opposition voices enable a target state to sustain its resistance to sanction demands.²⁰

Each of these factors is significant enough on its own merit to relegate any economic sanctions regime to failure. Failure is certain if a sanctions regime is impacted by these

factors in combination. Even more pronounced is the likelihood of failure if these factors manifest themselves in a sanctions policy against an autocratic government like Syria where economic power is centrally controlled. Unfortunately, the current U.S. sanctions regime against Syria is critically flawed across all factors.

DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS

The U.S. sanction policy towards Syria is fundamentally flawed in light of the first factor: the cost of compliance. Autocratic regimes by their nature are highly objectionable to power sharing, let alone transition of political power to an opposition party. Despite this fact, regime change accounted for 80 of 204 sanction episodes included in the HSEO study to which the authors claimed at least a partial success rate in about a third of the cases.²¹ A subsequent critical review of the claimed successes found only one instance where economic sanctions may have been causal to achieving the aim of regime change. In 1989, India closed its borders to Nepal in retaliation for its purchase of military equipment from China which led to the ruling party losing power; however, even in this one instance the sanctions were likely a secondary factor to the already existing political crisis internal to Nepal.²² In all other instances where regime change was the stated objective, the target country either did not concede or the use of force via military intervention or fomentation of internal coups were the primary causal factors.²³ The historical precedent is ample enough to illustrate the corresponding limitation between the size of demand and the severe likelihood of failure where sanctions are applied without the use, or implied use, of force. The U.S. sanction policy against the Syrian government has been applied in just this manner with an extremely high demand, the transition of political power, with no sufficient supporting force mechanism. This makes the objective of regime change highly unlikely. The cost of

compliance is too high for President Assad and his government to concede to through economic coercion alone.²⁴ Two reasons for sustained resistance to the demands are simply that President Assad has the capability to resist and also the existential need to reject the demands of U.S. sanctions policy.

First and foremost, President Assad has the means by which to resist acceding to the U.S. sanctions policy. Syrian military forces remain a powerful weapon, even in their weakened state, and outmatch the disjointed opposition groups. The willingness of President Assad to use this force without restraint has played a significant role in preserving his rule by protecting remaining government strongholds and taking offensive military operations to dislodge opposition forces. Additionally, the effect of the U.S. sanctions policy does not only degrade the regime. The broad nature of the sanctions has also had decimating impact on the Syrian middle and upper-middle classes from which the 2011 protest originated and opposition groups traditionally grow.²⁵ Further, the pervasive damage that the U.S. sanctions policy has had on the Syrian people has coalesced internal support, inclusive of the majority Sunni population, for President Assad. The people's fatigue of war, skepticism of an opposition that is growing increasingly militant, resistance to foreign interference, and government services and subsidies all contributed to President Assad winning the 2014 election with 88 percent of the vote.²⁶ Lastly, the U.S. sanctions policy has been employed without a significant secondary forcing mechanism that is practically required to facilitate regime change: force. The U.S.'s limited military engagements along with tepid support to opposition groups throughout the Syrian conflict have been inconsequential to President Assad. These aspects explain how President Assad can remain in power. Just as significant is why he must.

Political survival is critical to President Assad and his inner circle given the events that have transpired since the 2011 protests were violently quelled. A loss of power will expose Syrian government officials and their supporters to formal and informal reprisal actions. The lessons garnered from recent fallen Arab dictatorships provide a strong incentive for President Assad to sustain his rule and the protections inherent in it. Libya's Moammar Gadhafi and Iraq's Saddam Hussein have both been killed; Egypt's Hosni Mubarak, recently released from prison, is going back on trial for the protester deaths in 2011; and Tunisia's Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali has been sentenced in absentia to life in prison. Whereas conceding to U.S. demands to relinquish power is political suicide, it also represents an existential threat to President Assad, members of his inner circle, and the minority populations in Syria. Amnesty International has documented opposition group killings, torture, abductions, and the indiscriminate use of weapons against government employees and Alawite and Christian communities.²⁷ The growing presence of brutal Islamic State entities in Syria further increases such personal risks. The threat of torture and death alone is ample justification for President Assad not to concede to even the single demand of reigning in his use of force, let alone giving up power. Acquiescing to the demand of stopping his offensive operations would convey three key messages that President Assad cannot afford. To submit would signal that the regime can be swayed by external political influences; that the opposition has legitimacy; and that active political dissent will be tolerated.²⁸ These perceptions would weaken President Assad to the extent that he would lose the internal support that has kept him in power.

The merit of the U.S. sanctions policy objectives may be on-target, but the high cost of compliance to President Assad and his inner circle prevents their achievement. The

economic sanctions are simply not strong enough to achieve the stated objectives on their own. It could be argued that the sanctions could have been more effective if they were more pervasive and further degraded the economy and consequently limited the government's capability to resist. This argument relies on the punishing effects of sanctions and does not account for the political necessity for President Assad to retain his rule. The U.S. objectives are an existential threat to the political party, its members, and supporters and thereby too high a price for President Assad to pay. Syria has shown incredible resilience under the cloud of economic sanctions, but they have not done it alone. The external support President Assad is receiving through third parties has cultivated such endurance.

The second factor, outside support to Syria from third parties, is also problematic and a key element preventing achievement of U.S. objectives in Syria. Both state and non-state exploitation of the market dynamics in Syria, as well as direct support from sponsoring states, are serving to mitigate the impact of the economic sanctions. The combination of the two has provided enough revenue to sustain the Syrian government, albeit in a constrained fashion, since the U.S.'s tightening of economic sanctions in 2011.

The most pragmatic third party support comes from those entities that seek to exploit the environment created by the economic sanctions. Political differences aside, these entities simply seek to maximize the profit potential existing within the system. The trade imbalances created within Syria by the U.S. sanctions policy have diminished market competition to the extent that opportunist see the profitability in the risk verse reward equation.²⁹ There are currently eleven entities on the U.S. Treasury Department Office of Foreign Asset Control's (OFAC) 2014 Foreign Sanctions Evaders List for Syria due to violations of U.S. sanctions.³⁰ In August of 2015, seven more companies and four

individuals were sanctioned by OFAC for providing energy products in violation of U.S. sanctions policy against Syria.³¹ A few years earlier, a Dubai firm was fined 2.8 million dollars in 2013 for selling U.S. sanction restricted devices to the Syrian government.³² Most recently, London-based Reed Business Information (RBI) has been the target of an investigation regarding the supply of critical data to Syrian banks linked to terrorism and money laundering.³³ The RBI response denies wrongdoing and provides context to the limitations of U.S. sanctions. Their response stated, “16 {violations} refer to banks on US sanctions lists. However, BankersAlmanac is a UK entity and therefore not subject to US sanctions. These banks were not on UK or EU sanctions lists when services were provided to them.”³⁴ These examples illustrate the difficulty in curbing self-interested parties from seeking profit potential in Syria in a globalized marketplace. Further complicating matters is the ability for the firms to move from shell company to shell company. This has enabled violators to skirt consequences and continue activities that both add to their bottom line while sustaining the Syrian government’s capability to survive. Inasmuch as these economically driven third party supporters operate discretely, the politically motivated third party supporters are out in the open.

Tacit and direct third party support from sponsoring states has played a significant role in diminishing the impact of sanctions on Syria. These states have political motives for their support. Whereas profit sharing may be a nicety, it is not a necessity for these states. Beyond the financial assistance, the support of these states has served to bolster the Syrian government’s legitimacy to both internal and external audiences.³⁵ Russia, China, and Iran all have equity in sustaining the current Syrian government. Russian interest is twofold in that it is one of Syria’s largest arms dealers constituting over four billion dollars in sales and

also actively seeking to ameliorate U.S. influence in the region.³⁶ Chinese interests are much more pragmatic having been Syria's third largest importer of goods and working to maintain its financial ties throughout the conflict.³⁷ Iranian support is predicated on religion and strategy with the need to keep the Shiite-aligned Syrian government intact to maintain its arc of influence across the region.³⁸ The combined financial aid delivered by these three countries alone is estimated to be above five hundred million dollars per month in oil and credit.³⁹ Not only have these countries facilitated the Syrian government's survival, but Russia and China have also leveraged their United Nations veto power to block implementing additional sanctions.⁴⁰ Going beyond these big three, North Korea, Venezuela, and Angola have also provided additional direct aid in the form of technology, arms, fuel, and technical assistance that continues to sustain the Syrian government.⁴¹ The evidence is clear that the U.S. economic sanctions regime is being marginalized by these politically motivated state supporters. Just as evident are Russian and Chinese voting rights on the United Nations Security Council that virtually ensure that such third party support will continue without international reprisal.

The inability of the sanctions to sufficiently cut off resources means that neither of the U.S. objectives can be achieved. In contrast to the U.S. concession demands that require action from inside Syria, this factor works to render the U.S. sanctions policy inept from outside Syria. Third party support, regardless of motivation, provides another avenue for the Syrian government to resource what it deems critical. The argument that U.S. sanctions could be expanded or applied to economically and politically motivated third party supporters of Syria to ebb their influence has been considered and found wanting. First, it does not account for the pervasive nature of the globalized marketplace and the exponential

means by which to circumvent sanction limitations. Secondly, it is impractical given the major power brokers involved. As such, third party support will continue to be a viable resource to President Assad enabling him to maintain power and keep critical functions of the Syrian government working. His determination of what is critical given the resource constraints leads to the third factor inhibiting achievement of U.S. objectives via economic sanctions. That is President Assad's ability to control the distribution of resources within Syria.

The third factor that has hindered progress towards the U.S. objectives is the Syrian government's centralized distribution of resources. The winnowing of the Syrian coffers has placed the regime in a position of choosing between maintaining the loyal base of support or providing basic services to the general populace and by proxy opposition forces. Reflecting on the inability of the Syrian government to concede to the U.S. demand of relinquishing power, the decision to distribute funds in favor of loyalist is to be expected. With insufficient resources to accommodate both constituencies, the attendant repression on groups outside President Assad's inner circle and supporters is also just as expected. So prevalent is this resultant effect from economic sanctions on authoritarian regimes that it has earned its own moniker, the "authoritarian bargain."⁴²

On the plus side of the Syrian distribution ledger are the resources allocated to the ruling party and its supporters. Fiscally stressed single-party autocracies like Syria allocate the highest percentage of capital to this target group.⁴³ Capital investments, subsidies, and expenditures on goods and services are distribution mechanisms leveraged to maintain loyalist and co-opt additional support.⁴⁴ The manipulation of these means has led to some measure of economic reorganization within Syria. The net effect of this evolution is

increased dependency of loyalist on finite government resources which further serves to strengthen the power held by the ruling party.⁴⁵ In one example, President Assad shored up the support of the military and civil servants in 2013 by providing a forty percent increase in salary with an additional twenty percent for higher ranking members.⁴⁶ Intertwined financially and politically, the business elite of Syria remain loyal to the regime. This group controls seventy percent of what remains of the Syrian economy and is highly dependent on government contracts.⁴⁷ President Assad has shown incredible talent in tailoring domestic priorities and policies to ensure favored groups remain financially viable throughout the ongoing conflict. Note that viability is not the same as thriving; although, it is enough to keep, or perhaps better stated not lose, loyalist support. Despite repeated claims of pending regime collapse beginning in 2011, the Syrian government has survived primarily because it has sheltered its domestic support from the cumulative effects of the U.S. sanctions policy. In this respect, the economic sanctions have served to entrench further the public sector and business elite support.⁴⁸ However, this smaller segment of the population is well kept at the expense of the larger population, inclusive of the opposition.

On the negative side of the Syrian ledger rests the general populace and opposition parties. The economic deprivation caused by sanctions has increased poverty, unemployment, inflation, and led to Presidents Assad's reduction and tailoring of government services.⁴⁹ The dissent that grows from this scarcity environment is often dealt with through ever increasing levels of repression often characterized by human right violations.⁵⁰ With respect to sanctions, these outside groups are effectively double burdened, first by the holistic effects of economic decline and secondly by divergent government resource allocation.⁵¹ As sanctions continue to constrain government resources, the negative

impacts are exponentially transferred to these groups.⁵² The U.S. Agency for International Development's recently released numbers provide context to the human toll created by this compound effect: 22 percent of Syrians require humanitarian assistance; 25 percent of Syrian households are marginally food insecure or worse; 7.6 million people are displaced inside Syria with another 4.1 million in refugee status in neighboring countries; and clean water availability has declined by 50 percent since the sanctions were further tightened in 2011.⁵³ Further, the estimated 57 percent unemployment rate is driving illicit markets characterized by the buying and selling of stolen goods and other illegal activities that prey on this very population.⁵⁴ Unfortunately, the diversion of government resources is not a matter of choice from President Assad's perspective, but a necessity based on sanction driven resource scarcity. Although the majority of the population outside of the regime's inner circle suffers as bystanders in the ongoing conflict, the transfer of the economic burden to this group serves to weaken and further isolate the fractured opposition groups. In this respect, the long duration and broad nature of U.S. sanctions policy work in President Assad's favor. Lastly, the burden being placed on the most vulnerable elements of the population provides the regime an exploitable narrative on how external influences like the U.S. economic sanctions are the driving force behind the humanitarian crisis in Syria.

President Assad has proven highly capable of concentrating the effects of sanctions on outside groups by manipulating the means by which economic resources are allocated.⁵⁵ This has served to ameliorate the impact of sanctions on key party members and loyalist while damaging opposition groups. The authoritarian bargain is a valuable tool and one that has worked at cross purposes of the U.S. sanctions policy. Not only has the sanctions policy hurt the very people it was intended to help, but it may have strengthened the coalitions

inside Syria that support President Assad. The argument could be made that this manipulation of resources is built into the fabric single-party systems and that the sanctions policy merely magnifies its impact. Inasmuch that this is an accurate statement, the U.S. sanctions policy has driven the effects to an extreme whereby people caught in between pro-regime and opposition camps have become the most damaged parties to the conflict. President Assad's need to expand his support base would likely have led to increased, not decreased, resource allocation and support to these non-aligned groups. The control of how resources are allocated is a key element in President Assad's ability to stay in power. It is also a primary means by which he has staved off conceding to U.S. demands making the achievement of the economic sanction objectives unlikely.

CONCLUSIONS

The demand for President Assad to transition political power represents a cost of compliance too extreme for him to concede to. It is the fundamental reason the objectives of the U.S. sanctions policy will not be realized. Regime change solely through economic coercion has not been achieved where the target state was authoritarian.⁵⁶ That record of failure will remain intact with respect to President Assad. The U.S. objectives require political suicide on the part of President Assad and consequently place him and his supporting constituencies in a vulnerable position economically and personally. The high cost of concession requires compensatory means to influence President Assad's defiance. Employing military force in strength adequate enough to facilitate his removal is one mechanism to leverage the weakened state created by the economic constraints. This would require the commitment of U.S. or coalition forces to avoid negative second and third order effects of arming a fractured and increasingly militant opposition. Diplomatically, the U.S.

could work with states that are simultaneously sympathetic to President Assad and concerned about the humanitarian crisis in Syria. These states may be able to offer sanctuary opportunities for President Assad and inner circle members at personal risk thereby providing the regime a safe way out of the current political crisis. Whether any of these compensatory measures to the economic sanctions would enable progress towards achieving U.S. objectives is highly dependent on President Assad's assessment of his political survival capability within Syria. Given his persistence to this point, it is likely none of these additional approaches would be successful at terminating the conflict and restoring stability in Syria in the near term.

Third party support remains a key enabler of President Assad and the primary material means to resist U.S. sanction demands. Economic and politically motivated supporters have significantly blunted the effect of U.S. sanctions policy. These entities have provided sufficient economic resources to sustain the regime and have proven difficult to counter. A highly diversified global market place provides virtually unlimited avenues for economic trade with Syria outside of the U.S. sanctions policy. Additionally, the illusive nature of shell companies through which much of this activity takes place continues to complicate enforcement efforts. More challenging is the impact of major power third party supporters. Russian and Chinese support goes well beyond economic and their veto capability on the United Nations Security Council renders increased pressure on Syria unlikely. This combination of economic and political support from third parties will continue to inhibit achievement of the U.S. sanction objectives.

Lastly, President Assad's centralized control of how resources are distributed throughout Syria has also marginalized the impact of U.S. sanctions. The authoritarian

bargain continues to be exercised with Syria's general population bearing the greater burden of economic scarcity. This was inevitable with severely constrained government coffers. President Assad's need to maintain the financial viability of his inner circle and supporters is practically a constant variable. As resources dwindle, the deficit is increasingly levied on those groups not central to sustaining power. This is even more pronounced where opposition forces can be isolated. Countering this coping mechanism is difficult in the dangerous security environment that exists in Syria. A minimum threshold of safety is required for international aid groups to operate and abate the impact of divergent resource allocation. Unfortunately, the situation in Syria continues to devolve as government forces abandon outlying areas and become more locally concentrated. The result is an increasingly needy population that is neither served by its government, inherently governmental organizations, or non-governmental organizations.

All three of these factors have fatally impacted the U.S. economic sanctions policy and made the achievement of the stated objectives unrealizable. History is replete with examples of economic sanction failures where the target state was authoritarian. The lessons garnered from the current U.S. and Syria sanctions episode are in line with that history. Careful consideration of past cause and effect relationships in the employment of broad economic sanctions may have led to different policy and power choices; choices that may have improved the U.S.'s ability to influence the Syrian regime and averted the suffering of the Syrian people.

RECOMMENDATIONS

U.S. policy makers should immediately terminate the broad economic sanctions applied to Syria in 2011 in order to alleviate the human toll being levied on Syria's general population. The punitive sanctions should be replaced with economic incentives for the Syrian government and support organizations to deliver basic services including, but not limited to, security, shelter, and food to its people.

In the near term, the President of the U.S., in collaboration with the National Security Council and the U.S. Congress, should evaluate the efficacy of the demand for the political transition of power in Syria and likely eliminate it as a stated objective. Its removal could spur increased leverage of diplomatic and informational instruments of power and economic incentives that could make the achievement of the primary objective, cessation of Syrian government violence against civilians, more achievable.

Across the near, mid, and far term, the U.S. Department of State should aggressively work with the Syrian government, and states allied with it, to facilitate a lasting political solution to the current crisis. If successful, such action would serve as a necessary first step towards ameliorating the friction that ignited the 2011 protest in the near term, posture the country for growth and development in the midterm, and improve regional stability in the far term. In light of President Assad's liberalization of economic policies prior to the 2011 protests, it is a reasonable consideration that being successful along this line of effort may result in a Syrian government more accountable to its citizens and a responsible regional and international partner.

NOTES

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